United Nations A/62/132

General Assembly

Distr.: General
23 July 2007

Original: English

Sixty-second session
Item 64 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Social development: social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 60/133 of 16 December 2005.

The report addresses the issues of integrating a family perspective into policymaking and national capacity development in the area of family and provides information regarding the continued follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, paying particular attention to the information on actions and experiences concerning family issues submitted by Member States.

The activities of the United Nations Programme on the Family are also highlighted. The report concludes with suggestions and recommendations concerning areas for future consideration by the General Assembly.

* A/62/150.

07-43453 (E) 100807

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–3	3
II.	Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond: integrating a family perspective into policymaking and national capacity development	4–22	3
	A. Considerations for integrating a family perspective into policymaking	6–12	4
	B. National capacity development	13–14	5
	C. Integrating a family perspective at the international level	15–22	6
III.	Action taken at the national level concerning family issues	23–63	7
	A. Institutional aspects	24–35	8
	B. Strengthening policy action through family research	36–41	9
	C. Creating a conducive environment to strengthen and support families	42–63	11
	1. Equality between men and women, respect for all the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members and addressing and preventing intrafamily violence	43–49	11
	2. Reconciliation of work and family life	50–53	12
	3. Upbringing and development of the child	54–57	12
	4. Social service provision	58–63	13
IV.	Follow-up by the United Nations Programme on the Family	64–69	14
V.	Conclusions and recommendations	70–73	17

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/133 of 16 December 2005, entitled "Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the same resolution at its sixty-second session. The present report was prepared in response to that request and in the context of the follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

2. To facilitate the preparation of the report the United Nations Secretariat addressed to all Member States a note verbale, dated 20 April 2007, seeking information on the implementation of activities related to General Assembly resolution 60/133. As of 2 July 2007, a total of 24 responses to the note verbale had been received from Governments. Responses were received from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Portugal, the Russian Federation, San Marino, the Sudan and Thailand. These responses form the basis for much of the present report. The information received was too extensive to be included in its entirety owing to space limitations. The report, therefore, provides a brief synthesis of recent actions taken by those Governments that responded to the note verbale.

3. The report addresses the issues of integrating a family perspective into policymaking and national capacity development in the area of family. It then provides summary information on action taken at the national level concerning family issues, including national family policymaking, family research and creating a conducive environment to strengthen and support families, including such issues as social service provision, equality between men and women, upbringing and development of children, detecting and preventing intrafamily violence and reconciliation of work and family life. After a review of the activities of the United Nations Programme on the Family, the report concludes with conclusions and recommendations for future consideration.

II. Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond: integrating a family perspective into policymaking and national capacity development

4. The observances of the tenth anniversary fulfilled the important functions of celebrating family and promoting the objectives of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. These objectives were to: (a) increase awareness of family issues; (b) strengthen the capacity of national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies; (c) stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting, and affected by, the situation of families; (d) undertake, at all levels, analytical reviews and assessments of the situation and needs of families; (e) strengthen the effectiveness of efforts at all levels to execute specific programmes concerning families; and (f) improve collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in support of families.

5. The observances also served to strengthen political commitment to the issue of the family and to emphasize the importance of family as well as effective family programmes and policies. While the formal observances of the tenth anniversary of

the International Year of the Family have passed, the importance of the issue of the family to Member States, the United Nations and civil society remains. Family issues and the desire to strengthen the family's recognized and crucial role as the basic unit of society remain important priorities for countries all over the world.

A. Considerations for integrating a family perspective into policymaking

6. Awareness-raising on a range of family-related issues is one of the most important elements of any successful family policy. A significant part of integrating a family perspective into policymaking, whether at the national or international level, is for policymakers to know about the approach as well as cross-sectoral issues. Policymakers need to approach policies not only from the perspective of how individuals, communities or societal groups will be affected by them, but also from the perspective of how the individuals' families and households may be affected, whether directly or indirectly, recognizing the strong influence of family on levels of well-being.[1] In this regard, the stated objective of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family to increase awareness of family issues, including integration of a family-oriented perspective or approach into policymaking, is a crucial first step.

7. In addition to awareness-raising, other significant steps in the implementation of a comprehensive approach to family policies are conducting family research and analysis on issues or policies, both sectoral and cross-sectoral, from a family perspective and applying the results to policy decision-making. All welfare-enhancing policies have family connotations, and the objective of creating truly comprehensive social policies cannot be achieved in full unless family is part of the initial considerations and basic assumptions. Strengthening the connection between social science research and social policy can lead to better overall social policy, better family policy and increased well-being. Including a family perspective into social policies renders them more comprehensive and permits them to achieve more effective and lasting outcomes.

8. In some cases, research and analysis from a family perspective could be fairly straightforward, as the issues may relate directly to the many functions that families perform, such as childbearing, childrearing and other forms of family caregiving, or to family assistance or legal considerations, such as financial assistance to families in need or interventions in the case of intrafamily violence.

9. In other cases, the situation may be more complex, particularly when policies may have indirect impacts on families that may be difficult to anticipate at the outset. Many countries have established strong working relationships and partnerships between family researchers and Government ministries affecting family policy, and have established a direct link between family research and family policy deliberations and policymaking. In the case of complex issues, this approach could include having an analysis carried out by government or academic researchers or by having an overview of relevant family research presented directly to policymakers.

[1] For effects of family on well-being, see, for example, Mary Daly and Richard Rose, *First European Quality of Life Survey: Key Findings from a Policy Perspective* (Dublin, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2007).

10. Many government ministries commission reports or studies on specific issues, conduct their own national family research or family diagnostics, and have staff who stay up-to-date on recent academic studies and publications. An additional approach or mechanism is the use of family impact seminars to have academic family researchers speak directly to policymakers, such as parliamentarians and their aides, government service agency personnel, administrators of family-serving organizations and representatives from government ministries. This often involves an ongoing series of periodic seminars, briefing reports, newsletters, and follow-up discussions with the aim of providing objective, solution-oriented information targeted at bringing a family focus to policymaking and emphasizing the benefits of taking into account the role of the family in addressing social and economic issues. For example, in the United States these seminars are currently being used by 23 state governments, where family impact seminars are being conducted by family researchers from state universities to inform state legislators and other state-level family policymakers.[2] Other countries have established other types of links and partnerships.

11. Many of the policy issues dealt with at the national level would not be considered either purely or primarily family policy issues, such as issues relating to persons with disabilities, older persons or youth; health and health-care issues; specific public health issues, such as combating diseases such as HIV/AIDS or addressing intravenous drug use; education; labour policies, including labour regulations and the promotion of full employment and decent work, the criminal justice system; and even public transportation. Yet the effectiveness of the proposed policies pertinent to the above-mentioned sectors may nonetheless benefit from a family perspective and a more comprehensive approach.

12. Integrating a family perspective into such issues could involve the asking of some simple, straightforward questions to assess how policies and programmes might benefit from a family perspective. Examples of such questions could include:[3] Are families part of the policy issue, and if so, to what extent? How are families affected by this issue? Do families need to be involved in the policy response? How could or should families be taken into account in this policy or programme? The answers to these and other family-related questions may facilitate the inception and implementation of national social policy.

B. National capacity development

13. Integrating a family perspective into policymaking can be a significant challenge for any country. It requires vision, political will and a strong commitment. Developing countries are faced, however, with the additional challenge of augmenting their national capacity in family policymaking, usually under the constraints of having significantly less resources available to devote to this capacity development as well as to the implementation and monitoring of family policies.

[2] For additional information on integrating a family perspective into policymaking through family impact seminars, see Karen Bogenschneider, *Family Policy Matters: How Policymaking Affects Families and What Professionals Can Do* (Mahwah, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2006), as well as the Policy Institute for Family Impact Seminars web site, at http://familyimpactseminars.org/ (accessed on 2 July 2007).

[3] Questions presented in Karen Bogenschneider, op. cit., p. 295.

National capacity development in the area of family and family policymaking continues to be a major concern of developing countries.

14. International cooperation on family issues may assist countries to build national capacity to develop and implement policies that respond to the situation and challenges facing families in specific national circumstances. To facilitate cooperation within the United Nations system in strengthening national capacities, the United Nations programmes, funds and specialized agencies must continue to actively consider and search for ways in which to integrate a family perspective into their activities.

C. Integrating a family perspective at the international level

15. In its resolution 60/133, the General Assembly encouraged Governments to continue to make every possible effort to realize the objectives of the International Year of the Family and also to integrate a family perspective into policymaking.

16. A recent example of an integration of a family perspective at the international level is well demonstrated by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted by the General Assembly on 13 December 2006 (resolution 61/106) and opened for ratification on 30 March 2007. The Convention integrates family into the preamble and two relevant articles, and also includes a separate article focused specifically on family issues related to persons with disabilities.

17. In particular, the preamble states that the States Parties to the Convention are convinced that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State, and that persons with disabilities *and their family members* should receive the necessary protection and assistance *to enable families* to contribute towards the full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities [emphasis added].

18. Following the preamble, article 8, Awareness-raising, then speaks about adopting measure to raise awareness throughout society, *including at the family level*, regarding persons with disabilities. Article 22, Respect for privacy, states that no person with disabilities shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy *family*, home or correspondence or other types of communication [emphasis added].

19. Article 23, Respect for home and the family, then addresses specific issues relating directly to family and persons with disabilities, including eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities relating to marriage, family and parenthood; ensuring the rights and responsibilities with respect to children; ensuring that children with disabilities have equal rights with respect to family life; and ensuring the protection of children with respect to separation from their parents and, if necessary, to alternative care.

20. In other areas at the international level, the United Nations Millennium Development Goals are strongly related to family. A range of family-related considerations are certainly implicit in the Millennium Development Goals, even though the word "family" is not mentioned. For instance, the goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases are strongly

related to family. Incorporating a family perspective in policies designed to meet these goals may make these policies more effective.

21. In 2005, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs published a global study entitled *Living Arrangements of Older Persons Around the World*.[4] This was in response to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing[5] adopted in 2002, which called for research on the advantages and disadvantages of different living arrangements for older persons, including familial co-residence and independent living, in different cultures and settings. The study includes family perspectives in examining the living arrangements of older persons. As more people survive to reach old age and those who attain old age are living longer than before, a consequence is that families comprising three or even four generations have become common, considerably expanding the alternatives for living arrangements of older persons. At the same time, long-term shifts in economies and societies are transforming many aspects of day-to-day family life, including traditions favouring lifelong co-residence of parents and children as a basic means of ensuring support for young and old.

22. Given the strong linkages that exist between employment and family issues, there are important opportunities at the upcoming forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development, where the priority theme is "Promoting full employment and decent work for all", to reflect a family perspective in a policy outcome document. Employment is an intergenerational issue, is linked directly to the economic and financial security of families through the employment of parents, and implicitly affects younger family members. The decent work agenda, including such issues as child labour, working hours, and work-life balance, interacts with family dynamics and has direct implications for families, parenting, child welfare and the quality of family life. In this respect, there may be room for the integration of a family perspective into the policy aspects of the priority theme of the Commission.

III. Action taken at the national level concerning family issues

23. In its resolution 60/133, the General Assembly addressed several issues to Governments. These items can be broadly grouped into three categories: institutional aspects, such as national family policymaking, coordination and the integration of a family perspective into policymaking; strengthening policy action through family research; and creating a conducive environment to strengthen and support families. The present section of the report reflects the information on actions and experiences concerning family issues provided by Member States under these three general headings and also includes a fourth on other related actions and issues.

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.XIII.9 (ST/ESA/SER.A/240).

[5] *Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, 8-12 April 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.IV.4), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

A. Institutional aspects

24. In addition to encouraging Governments to make every possible effort to realize the objectives for the International Year of the Family and to integrate a family perspective into policymaking, the General Assembly invited Governments to maintain the national coordination mechanisms established or revitalized during the observance of the tenth anniversary of the Year in order to coordinate family policies, programmes and strategies. It also invited Member States to undertake a review of the role and functions of existing national machineries for the family in order to better integrate family issues into national development programmes. The General Assembly also invited States, inter alia, to address family-related concerns within the framework of the commitments undertaken at relevant major United Nations conferences and in their follow-up processes.

25. Responses received by the Secretariat highlight national efforts in this regard and illustrate various institutional dimensions of national family policies through which countries coordinate activities and services for the family and integrate a family perspective into policymaking.

26. In Azerbaijan, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs was established in early 2006. One of the main objectives of the Committee is aimed at forming and pursuing the State policy on family issues. This has included the creation of a unique database and information system on families. The Committee also works in cooperation with other governmental bodies, such as the Ministry of Justice. Azerbaijan also adopted, in 2006 and 2007, several legal acts regulating family relations, as a continuation and follow-up to the adoption of a new Family Code in 2001.

27. Burkina Faso is following the recommendations of the African Union to develop a plan of action for the promotion of the family. It has also implemented several activities to raise public awareness on family issues and to communicate to the public, through various organized activities and through television and radio, information regarding the promotion of the family and social and legal measures to protect it. In particular, the Government has made use each year of the celebrations of the International Day of Families to raise awareness, organizing each year the observances in different regions of the country. The observances include information on such issues as health and HIV/AIDS, and have been used to register births, conduct marriages and issue national identity cards for social protection services to persons in vulnerable situations.

28. The Czech Government is implementing its Action Plan for Support of Families with Children 2006-2009. This Plan was preceded by a National Report on the Family in 2004, which was prepared by the Family Policy Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in cooperation with academia and NGOs, as well as a National Concept of Family Policy document, prepared in cooperation with an external group of experts, which designated principles and defined priorities of family policy for the Action Plan. The Ministry also held an international conference on family policy in 2006 entitled "Comprehensive Family Policy as the Priority of the State: Is the Czech Republic a Family-Friendly State"?

29. Germany held an international conference that included discussion and debate with Eastern European accession States about visions, perspectives and possible cooperation for a European family policy.

30. Nigeria has begun an initiative to produce and implement a multisectoral Plan of Action on the Family in Nigeria, modelled after the African Union Plan of Action on the Family in Africa, to strengthen and harmonize family-centred policies and programmes. A critique workshop for stakeholders on the zero draft is scheduled for August 2007.

31. Peru approved a National Plan of Support to the Family 2004-2011, passed a law on family strengthening in 2005, established the General Office of the Family and Community within the Ministry of Women and Social Development to oversee family issues and created a multisectoral commission for the implementation of the National Plan.

32. The Philippines is in its second year of implementation of its National Decade Plan for the Filipino Family 2005-2015, which is the country's guide to fulfilling its commitments to the objectives of the International Year of the Family. In order to carry out such functions as formulating and coordinating family policies, plans and strategies and conducting research, a National Committee on the Filipino Family was created in 2003, composed of 16 national Government agencies and 17 non-governmental entities. The Committee also works to strengthen national capacity to implement and monitor family policies.

33. Portugal created recently two new entities functioning within the structure of the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity with specific competencies in family-related areas. One is the Consultative Council of Families, whose main task is to promote and guarantee civil society participation in the process of development of family policy and evaluation of their impact on families. The other is the Commission for the Promotion of Family Matters, which was created within the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity to mainstream family interests into the political agenda and to promote the intervention of various ministries within the process of development and evaluation of family policy.

34. The Sudan is implementing the first current five-year period of 2003-2008 of its Strategy for Women and Families for the Twenty-five Years to Come. It is also implementing a National Family Strategy, whose objectives are to protect the family and promote its role in society, and a policy of capacity-building and development for the family, which includes combating female illiteracy and ensuring that educational opportunities and the educational system are in line with the needs of family and society.

35. Thailand formed the Family Institution Development Policies and Strategies 2004-2013. The policies and strategies were approved by the Cabinet in May 2007 covering the four main strategic areas of holistic family potential development, family social safety nets, strong family management system and social network empowerment. Thailand also established, in 2003, the National Commission on Women's Affairs and Family Development, chaired by the Prime Minister or a designated Deputy Prime Minister, to be in charge of proposing policies and plans to promote the potential of women, gender equality and family institutional security.

B. Strengthening policy action through family research

36. In its resolution 60/133, the General Assembly recommended that Governments, in cooperation with concerned academic and research centres as well

as relevant non-governmental organizations, encourage action-oriented research that addresses public policies with a family perspective and contributes to the development of strategies, policies and programmes aimed at strengthening the economic and sustainable livelihood of families.

37. In this regard, Austria's Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection contains a Unit for Men's Affairs that has commissioned numerous studies specific to men and a men's policy.[6] This is part of Austria's approach to deepen gender mainstreaming, which requires the active involvement of men in gender and family policy and includes the role of fathers in the reconciliation of family and work. The scientific research into interests and problems specific to men forms the basis for working with men and provides a component of policy advice in the area of gender policy. Research published by the Unit for Men's Affairs include a survey of men's policy as well as separate studies on the consequences of divorce on men, male suicide, father deprivation, boys and youth studies, positive fatherliness and male identity, ethical and psychosocial aspects of male health and the reconciliation of family and work from a men-specific point of view. The Unit also published the outcome document for the First European Fathers' Conference held in 2004.

38. In early 2006, Mexico's National System for the Integrated Development of the Family presented the results of an interdisciplinary research project that it had coordinated and conducted from 2003-2005 entitled "Diagnostic of the Mexican Family". Consultations on the results of the Diagnostic were held in an inter-institutional round table that included Government institutions in their role as coordinator of the study and of the implementation of the study's proposals and recommendations, civil society organizations, enterprises, academics and representatives of churches and various religions. The Diagnostic is comprised of several studies and databases, including statistical information on Mexican families and homes, a national survey on family dynamics, an analysis of family legislation in Mexico and a study on the public policies that affect families. Consultations were also held in early 2007 to hear specific public policy proposals to benefit families.

39. Current research and action has also been directed to fatherhood and men's role in the family. Mexico has drafted and implemented a National Family Education Model that trains fathers in various skills and knowledge that will contribute to the strengthening of the family.

40. Peru is undertaking, in the National Institute of Statistics and Information, a survey on demography and family health to collect information and data over a period of five years. Peru's Ministry of Women and Social Development has also financed several research projects on intrafamily problems, including violence and sexual abuse, in order to develop adequate strategies for the application of policies on the protection and promotion of the family.

41. Thailand's Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development, in cooperation with the School of Human Ecology of Sukhothai Thammathirat University, has conducted research regarding a situational analysis and policy study for assisting

[6] The information regarding Austria's Federal Ministry of Social Security, Generations and Consumer Protection comes from a submission in 2007 of information and reports to the United Nations Programme on the Family prior to the issuance of the Secretary-General's note verbale of 20 April 2007.

special families. This research includes case studies of single-parent, teenage-parent and homeless families, studying first the situations, risks and problems of these families. The research then analyses government policies and practical methods that support these special families and recommends appropriate policies and measures to respond better to their particular needs.

C. Creating a conducive environment to strengthen and support families

42. The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/133, also urged Member States to create a conducive environment to strengthen and support all families, recognizing that equality between women and men and respect for all the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members are essential to family well-being and to society at large. It also noted the importance of the reconciliation of work and family life, and recognized the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child.

1. Equality between men and women, respect for all the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members and addressing and preventing intrafamily violence

43. Brazil's New Civil Code of 2003 abolished the concept of "concubinage" and introduced the concept of "family power" that reinforces equality of rights and duties of fathers and mothers. Brazil also has a Programme to Combat Domestic and Family Violence, and a bill is currently being discussed in the National Congress to establish 6 December as the National Day for Mobilization of Men to Bring an End to Violence Against Women.

44. In Cyprus, the principle of gender equality is integrated in all laws concerning the relations among spouses and the relations between parents and children. Men and women, both as spouses and as parents, have the same rights and responsibilities in the family. Cyprus is also a State party to many international instruments concerning the legal protection of the family.

45. In the past three years, Croatia has prepared and enacted several strategies, campaigns, laws and protocols, such as the National Strategy of Protection against Family Violence 2005-2007 and Rules of Procedure in Cases of Family Violence, the National Campaign to Combat Family Violence Against Women (following the recommendation of the Council of Europe) and the National Plan of Activities for the Rights and Interests of Children 2006-2012. It has also set up county family centres and a network of advisory centres for victims of family violence.

46. The Dominican Republic has been seeking to improve the status of women, protect women against gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace and to protect all family members from intrafamily violence through the passing and modification of laws governing these issues and through the creation of a National Council for Combating Intrafamily Violence. In addition, the Dominican Republic has also linked explicitly its family policy to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

47. Egypt passed, in 2004, a law concerning family courts with a view to spread the concept of human respect, dignity and equity and equality between both genders

as well as another law concerning alimony sums and the enforcement of alimony judgements in the case of divorce and abuse settlements.

48. San Marino observed the 2007 international Day of Families with the theme "Safeguarding children who are the victims of violence". This was organized during its period as chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from November 2006 to May 2007 as an initiative within the pan-European campaign to prevent and combat violence against women, including domestic violence. In particular, an analysis was carried out regarding the right of children to be protected from direct or indirect violence and the risks they face when they are witnesses of domestic violence.

49. In 2005, the Sudan enacted an article to its constitution equalizing and ensuring the same rights to both men and women, including establishing the equality of rights between two spouses and the equality of women in the workplace. This was followed in March 2007 by the enactment of a policy for the advancement of women with the goal of giving the necessary means to women to ensure their rights.

2. Reconciliation of work and family life

50. In Chile, concern over recent significant changes in family composition, work and social relationships has led the Government to produce a code of good labour practices and non-discrimination. One major guideline of the code seeks to promote greater compatibility between work and family, and has led to initiatives, such as alternative work arrangements, to facilitate the exercise of the parental responsibilities of both parents. Chile has also passed recent family legislation, updating laws on intrafamily violence, breastfeeding at the workplace, provisions for employees to take care of sick children, paternity leave and employment protection of single-parent fathers.

51. The Czech Republic is initiating several measures to improve the balance between work and family life, including introducing more flexibility into the labour market for parental and maternity leave and work hours, reforming the tax and social system to reinforce family solidarity, reinforcing the role of the father in childcare and improving services for children.

52. Portugal has implemented initiatives to reconcile work and family life, including leave arrangements and the protection of women and men in the workplace, and by making a large investment in childcare services in 2006.

53. San Marino has also taken measures to reconcile work and family life issues, and the Dominican Republic emphasized, in their submission, the relationship between economic crises or difficulties and the time spent working by parents, taking away from the care of their children.

3. Upbringing and development of the child

54. In Belarus, changes have been enacted in recent years to improve the marriage and family code, ensure the rights of the child and to provide benefits to families who are raising children. The Government is currently implementing the programme Children of Belarus 2006-2010 in conjunction with its National Programme of Demographic Security. The efforts of various State authorities are geared towards parenting and the provision of support in the education and upbringing of children. Financial benefits, including a birth benefit, are provided to families with the birth

and caring for children until age three, and additional tax benefits are provided to families with three or more children.

55. In Finland, childhood and family policy is one of the priority areas of the new programme, introduced by the Government in April 2007. The aim of the Government is to develop family policy so that it will secure the development of children in all circumstances. With respect to the development of services for families with children, Finland has family centres that organize primary services, such as maternity and child welfare clinics, day care and school. The focus of the work of a family centre is on reaching children and families in need of support and addressing problems at an early stage.

56. Japan began implementing, at the end of 2004, the Child Care Support Plan to specifically carry out the major measures stipulated in the General Policies of Measures for a Society with Fewer Children, which was prepared as guidelines for comprehensive measures to combat the decrease in the fertility rate. The Plan sets five-year measures and targets for 2009 for four major issues: raising independent youth and mentally healthy and tolerant children, supporting compatibility between work and family life, encouraging understanding of the importance of life and family roles, and providing support and collaboration for child care.

57. The Russian Federation has increased material support and introduced market-oriented voucher mechanisms to families for the birth of a child and for the upbringing of children. Since January 2007, a new childbirth benefit has been enacted where, after the birth of a second child and every child thereafter, the mother is given a "maternal voucher". This voucher represents a substantial amount of money and can be used towards improving housing conditions, education of children or as a contribution towards the mother's retirement pension. Another voucher, the "childbirth medical voucher", was also introduced in 2007. Expecting and new mothers can choose between different health-care establishments and use the childbirth voucher towards medical care for prenatal and birth medical services and for the care of the child during the first year of the child's life. The voucher finances medical services and serves as an added financial incentive to the health-care establishment to retain expecting mothers as clients by providing higher quality maternity and post-natal care.

4. Social service provision

58. In Brazil, the family is the guiding focus of social programmes and the Government has taken action in support of families and services to families. These actions include the Bolsa Familia family stipend programme of cash transfers to poor and extremely poor families provided that they comply with the conditions that their children have an 85 per cent school attendance rate and that mothers attend prenatal care to ensure adequate child development and vaccinations.

59. Bolsa Familia also represents a unification of an assortment of social programmes in order to integrate and streamline management and expand coverage while increasing the average value of benefits received. Other Brazilian social programmes benefiting families are the Family Health Programme, Integral Welfare Programme for Families, Family Agriculture Programme, National Housing Programme and Integral Women's Health-care Programme.

60. Egypt provides di ect services for families through family guidance and counselling offices located throughout the country. These offices are established by the Government and managed by a registered NGO or private foundation. Among the services they provide are guiding families towards the different services and resources available to families in the community, conducting studies related to the family, enhancing awareness of family issues and providing education and information on marital issues and reproductive health. Egypt is also providing accommodation services in neighbouring Arab countries to its expatriates, who are often young people living away from their families.

61. Iraq has a social protection network that has the objective to provide coverage and social protection to all persons and their families in difficult, precarious or vulnerable situations, including the unemployed, widows, orphans, divorced persons raising children, families of prisoners, older persons and students. The number of people who are beneficiaries of this social protection network rose, in 2007, to 750,000. Actions have been taken to increase awareness through a publicity campaign, improve service provision to families through an agreement signed with the World Bank in 2006 and increase accessibility via the opening of more offices.

62. Nigeria has embarked on a programme of material support to women-headed families, which are among the poorest, to enhance their earning capacity and open up opportunities for better education and health for their children.

63. The Philippines is implementing, through its National Decade Plan for the Filipino Family, programmes and projects to improve family access to basic social services, alleviate poverty, provide alternative family care for abandoned or neglected children and operate crisis intervention services. In addition, it is also implementing such family-oriented services as pre-marriage and marriage counselling, programmes to increase parent effectiveness and responsible parenthood, and training to enhance the knowledge and capacities of fathers in performing familial tasks.

IV. Follow-up by the United Nations Programme on the Family

64. The General Assembly, in its resolution 60/133, encouraged continued and increased inter-agency cooperation within the United Nations system on family-related issues, and encouraged the programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system to identify focal points on family matters within their offices to support the integration of family issues in their work.

65. In this regard, the General Assembly, in its resolution 59/147, had invited the Secretary-General to disseminate, at the forty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development in 2006, a compilation of existing development cooperation activities of the United Nations system in the field of the family. In response to that invitation, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs initiated written correspondence with the executive secretaries of the United Nations regional commissions and with the heads of relevant United Nations programmes, funds, specialized agencies, research and training institutes and other United Nations entities. The correspondence requested relevant information in regard to family-related activities, and further requested the name and contact information of family focal points responsible for family activities in the respective United Nations

entities, for the purpose of strengthening communications and the exchange and sharing of information.

66. Responses to the correspondence from the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs were received from the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. Based upon the inputs received, the compilation was assembled and disseminated in February 2006 and provides information on activities in the field of the family for the benefit of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, other relevant United Nations bodies, Member States and observers, and is available on the Programme on the Family website (http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family).

67. In addition to assembling the compilation of existing activities in the area of the family, during the same exercise the Programme on the Family also assembled a compilation of the family focal points and contact persons from the inputs received. This list of focal points has already been quite useful for cooperation and the sharing of information, such as through the recent joint work between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and ESCAP related to family. It has also been useful for referring requests related to either a particular region or language. For example, it was possible to refer requests from both a Government and an NGO from Latin America for information on family and the United Nations in their region and in Spanish to the focal point on family issues in ECLAC.

68. In its resolution 60/133, the General Assembly also called upon the United Nations Secretariat to continue its role on family issues within the United Nations system, and in that regard encouraged the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to continue cooperation with Governments, the United Nations system and civil society in strengthening national capacities through the implementation of the mandated objectives of the International Year of the Family. In this regard, the Programme on the Family has undertaken a range of activities since the submission, in July 2005, of the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/60/155) on the follow-up to and celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond. These activities include the following:

(a) Provision of technical assistance to the Maldives in formulating a national family policy. The Maldives requested this assistance during the second half of 2006. A preliminary needs assessment mission was carried out in conjunction with another mission to the region. Two consultants from the region were then identified and recruited, based upon their knowledge and experience dealing with family policy issues as well as their familiarity with underlying cultural and religious issues and influences. The consultants conducted their first mission to the Member State in the first half of 2007 and continue to work with the relevant ministries in the formulation of the national family policy, with the objective of finalizing it within the next several months;

(b) Co-organization, in cooperation with ESCAP, UNFPA and the United Nations Programme on Ageing of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, of the Seminar on the Social, Health and Economic Consequences of Population Ageing in the Context of Changing Families, held from 25 to 27 July 2007 at ESCAP headquarters in Bangkok. The Seminar brought together both regional experts and Government officials to address the impacts of ageing in the context of changing families in the region, integrating a family perspective into the discussions and policy recommendations on ageing;

(c) Organization, in cooperation with ESCAP as host, of a policy workshop entitled "HIV/AIDS and family well-being in South and South-East Asia", held from 6 to 9 December 2005 at ESCAP headquarters in Bangkok. The workshop brought together representatives of Governments and NGOs as well as academic experts and practitioners from various countries in South and South-East Asia to discuss the changing situation of families in the region, to consider the ways in which families and communities are coping with the impact of HIV/AIDS, to contribute to the further development of a strategic policy framework to assist Governments to strengthen the capacity of families and family networks, and to assist Governments to integrate a family perspective into their policies on combating HIV/AIDS;

(d) The publication and dissemination in the second half of 2005 of a study by Mark A. Belsey on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the family, entitled *AIDS and the Family: Policy Options for a Crisis in Family Capital*.[7] This publication of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs integrates a family perspective into addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic through a family-based analysis and the recommendation of public policy initiatives;

(e) Observance of the International Day of Families (15 May) in 2006. The day was observed at United Nations Headquarters on 11 May 2006 under the theme "Changing families: challenges and opportunities". The 2006 observance was organized jointly with the NGO Section of the Department of Public Information with the participation of the New York NGO Committee on the Family, and included a presentation of the stamps celebrating the International Day of Families issued in May 2006 by the United Nations Postal Administration as well as a seminar on the theme. Speakers included representatives from Governments, the United Nations system and civil society;

(f) Observance of the International Day of Families (15 May) in 2007. In 2007, the theme was "Families and persons with disabilities", and was observed at United Nations Headquarters on 15 May 2007 with the assistance of the United Nations Secretariat of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the participation of the New York NGO Committee on the Family, which chaired the seminar held on the theme. Speakers at the seminar included a representative from Government and experts from disability community organizations;

(g) Co-sponsorship, with the NGO Health Committee, of a seminar entitled "Childbirth and early parenting experiences of some physically immobile mothers" in February 2007, organized by the NGO Health Committee, with the participation of the Programme on the Family as a side-event of the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The seminar included presentations by an

[7] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.06.IV.1 (ST/ESA/288).

academic expert, a social worker practitioner and a personal account by a mother who is a wheelchair user;

(h) Participation and representation at conferences and meetings organized by Governments, the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and academia. Representation included speaking and participating at: meetings of the New York NGO Committee on the Family in 2005 and 2006 in New York; a meeting of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family in Vienna in late 2005; two annual meetings of academics of the National Council on Family Relations in late 2005 and 2006 in Phoenix, Arizona, and Minneapolis, Minnesota, respectively; an international conference in Provo, Utah, in mid-2006; a family conference in Chesapeake, Virginia, in early 2007; a meeting of a civil society organization in Monroe Township, New Jersey, in early 2007; and an NGO briefing organized by the NGO Section of the Department of Public Information in 2007.

69. These activities provide important opportunities for Governments, family experts, NGOs, and other interested actors to exchange information, experiences and good practices. The information from these activities can be utilized by Governments in the formulation and implementation of family policies, programmes and activities.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

70. The present report highlights some recent national actions to strengthen and improve the well-being of families since the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and presents some recent activities of the United Nations Programme on the Family.

71. The family is the fundamental group unit of society and, as such, all social policies are family related. Given the rich universe of families, Member States use a wide range of policy instruments to address family issues and to promote family-related policies. In order to create truly comprehensive national social policies, family and family well-being must be a central part of the considerations and assumptions of policymakers and all other stakeholders. Research on family serves to provide a better understanding of family and of the range of options and rich menu of policy tools at the disposal of the State when family policies are conceived and implemented.

72. The present report has provided country information on family policy based upon submissions received by Member States. As shown by the information presented in their submissions, many Member States are carrying out a wide range of family policies to promote family well-being using several varied policy instruments.

73. In considering continued follow-up action to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:

1. Aware that the Commission for Social Development, at its forty-sixth session in 2008, will be considering policy aspects and recommendations on the priority theme of "Promoting full employment and decent work for all", **the General Assembly may wish to invite the Commission for Social Development to integrate a family perspective into the Commission's proposed policy**

outcome document on the priority theme, and to also invite the Commission to integrate a family perspective into its consideration of other issues, such as youth and ageing.

2. Cognizant that integrating a family perspective into policymaking and coordinating family policies and activities require a conscious and sustained effort by Governments, **the General Assembly may wish to encourage Governments to continue in their efforts to integrate a family perspective into policymaking through either new, revitalized, or currently established mechanisms and to link them to the efforts and mechanisms utilized to coordinate family policies and activities. The General Assembly may also wish to emphasize the importance of partnerships between various national and international stakeholders in formulating and implementing family policy.**

3. Conscious of the importance of time spent by parents with their children for the well-being of families and particularly for the development, upbringing and well-being of children, and fully aware of the pressures and stresses of work and earning a living in all countries, especially those that have been affected by economic crises, **the General Assembly may wish to invite Governments to support families by developing a sustainable family-work system geared at reconciling work and family life and establishing and maintaining a viable balance between these two facets of life.**

4. Recognizing that national capacity development in the area of family policy is of utmost importance for developing countries and that international cooperation can help countries to build national capacity to develop and implement policies that respond to the situation and challenges facing families, **the General Assembly could encourage the programmes, funds and specialized agencies to continue to consider how they could integrate a family perspective in their activities to facilitate cooperation within the United Nations system in strengthening national capacities. It could also further recommend, for those United Nations entities that may have not yet done so, to identify a focal point on family matters within their offices. It could further request the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to be in communication with the focal points, updating the list of focal points, as appropriate, and to continue to build upon the recently disseminated compilation of existing development cooperation activities of the United Nations system to strengthen cooperation in the field of the family.**

5. Acknowledging the need for additional capacity-building at the national level to promote and facilitate the development and implementation of family policies, **the General Assembly could encourage Governments to support the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities to enable the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to provide expanded assistance to countries, upon their request.**

6. Recognizing the continuing need for data and in-depth research on the family and its functions, relationships and dynamics, and building on the experience of some countries that have undertaken family diagnostic studies and surveys, **the General Assembly may wish to recommend that Governments encourage research activities that provide input for public policies with a family perspective and strengthen policy through family research. Participatory methodologies and techniques could be used to elaborate the priority issues and**

needs of families, to identify the structures and composition of families and to collect opinions, attitudes and values of people of different generations. The Assembly may also wish to recommend that research activities of Governments in the area of family policies be supplemented with research and publications on relevant topics conducted and supported by the United Nations Programme on the Family.